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REFLECTING THE LEVEL OF SOCIAL ADAPTATION IN THE DRAWINGS OF CHILDREN AGED 6 – 7

Ani Zlateva

Trakia University – Stara Zagora (Bulgaria)

Abstract. One of the main purposes of the preschool education is not only to educate the kids an ability to deal with day-to-day actions, and gaining knowledge, but also forming their main social competences. This research aims at using children's' drawings as a diagnostic tool to state the level of social adaptation of children aged 6 – 7. At this age they complete the stage of their preschool education, and the social skills that they gained are of crucial importance in their new school environment. For the aims of this research the following themes have been adapted: "Draw-a-Person test", "Kinetic family drawing", "House-Tree-Person test". Using them are analyzed the thematic child drawings for diagnosing the kid's attitude towards the social environment. Researching the drawings the following indicators have been used for analyzing and diagnosing: willingness to work on a certain theme, and the correspondence with the image with the theme, the size and place of the main figures, the level of saturation with details and colors, connection between the different objects included in the drawing. In the thematic drawings of the 6 – 7 year-olds we're looking for a decoded in a graphic way message for the level of social development of the child and its awareness of itself regarding its environment. Using the language of drawing the kid expresses its position as "The Self" in society and makes clear its position regarding its relationships with the people that surround it.

Keywords: social adaptation; preschool education; children; drawings

At the age of 6 – 7 years, according to age periods, described by Piaget, kids are in the stage of intuitive thinking, which counts on more partite ideas, with which the preoperational period is over.

The age differences at the 6 – 7 year-olds are linked with the transition from one period in the child's development – the preschool, to the next period of its growing – being a student. At this age kids gradually expand their horizons and the borders in their micro world, they develop an ability to communicate with other kids their age and with adults, they're capable of perceiving new rules, to change activities, and fulfilling requirements. It is gradually socializing, adapting to social environ-

ment. This is expressed with the transition from the typical self-centered position of the child, to a more objective relations with the surrounding people, with which there is an understanding of other peoples' points of view and a willingness for collaboration with them.

Communication is of great importance for the children aged 6 – 7. They develop an ability to choose the kids that they want to communicate with. That's why the first friendship relations develop at this age. Except the desire for collaboration, the eagerness to compete is also developed. With this the child wants to make itself stand out, and to draw the attention upon itself.

Socialization is defined as a development of the personality in the aspect of its social determination and function. In the process of socialization the individual turns into an independent and to a greater extent a consciously acting person, having a certain social function and participating artistically at forming social relations. Socialization according to Ivanov is functioning at the specific socium of the person that's socializing itself, with which is causing a change both in the socium and in the person. He states that socialization can be defined as an inclusion of the person in society and social relationships (Ivanov, 2007).

Kindergarten is the first social structure the child should participate in, to follow certain rules, to create relations of support and collaboration with children its age and adults that take care of it. Rusinova thinks that the impact if socializing processes on the adaptive skills of children at preschool age are affected positively with pedagogical interaction in kindergarten using thematically-situational dialogue, positive emotion activation the personal motivation and motivational strategy at learning (Rusinova, 2006: 91). In one research of the adaptive abilities of children at preschool age regarding the living conditions and interaction in kindergarten Elena Rusinova presents the social adaptation of kids aged 5-6 at the following levels: 25% have a high activity in adaptation, 67% have a medium level of their adaptive skills, and 7,5% of the kids have problems with adaptation (Rusinova, 2006: 93).

According to Vigotsky drawing is an activity that shows the development of the ability of the consciousness to designate.

The main purpose of the thematically-plotted drawing in art education in kindergarten is for the kids to develop an ability of expressing their impressions of the surrounding reality using artistic methods. The development of an ability to create a thematic composition of 6 – 7 year-olds is connected to the development of perceptions and analytic thinking. With that they are able to build such a type of drawings and to separate the important and the secondary in the plot, and to deliver the links between the separate drawn objects. This period of the childrens' drawings is defined as an intellectual realism by Luke.

The subject of kids' drawings at the end of the preschool period is diverse and is connected to the interests of the kid at that age. Usually the kids aged 6 – 7 depict

in their drawings what mostly intrigues them at the moment. This can be objects or scenes of the surrounding world, fictional heroes from books or movies. Kids at that age are very interested in the family matters, understanding the important role that the family has in their lives.

A great development has undergone the image of a human figure which is shown in the particularization of the proportions of the human body, enrichment with lots of details like nose, hair, ears, clothes etc.

The proportional ratio between the different depicted objects keeps building itself according to the emotional value the object has for the kid, and not to the actual size of the objects and their relation with each other. The most important objects according to the kid are the biggest. The colors of the separate objects is depicted closer to the colors they have in real life, but color is also used to depict the kid's attitude towards a certain object.

The trend toward a more naturalistic use of color reaches near perfection in the group of six-to-eight-year-olds. Colors for the Garden theme are object related or "true local colors" and the outlines for humans are drawn with a single color, preferably orange or black. Although most drawings are colorful, a principle of realism guides, as well as constrains, color use. Thus, well-known attributes of the object dictate certain color choices; for example, brown or blue eyes, red lips, yellow, brown or black hair. With the exception of the color purple, which in our tasks is used sparingly, all available colors appear frequently, and appropriately (Golomb, 2004: 137).

The rich decorative ornaments of certain objects are also connected to the level of attractiveness that the objects have for the kid. The spatial appurtenance of the objects is mostly depicted in a flat two-dimensional way, and only a few of the more observant kids are trying to depict the third dimension in their drawings. The frieze-composition keeps being the favorite compositional technique for most of the kids aged 6 – 7, although a few of them are trying to build more complicated compositions. These kids are trying to depict their thoughts and feelings in a richer way in their drawings.

Of great significance in the thematic drawings of the kids, as Golomb states, is the importance of a theme. The drawings can convey its mood, feeling, and a view of the event, despite the very obvious representational limitations that characterize child art (Golomb, 2004: 154).

In Golomb studies, which were designed to probe the child's competence to depict feelings, have demonstrated that deeply felt experiences and meaningful themes can attain a directness of expression that, despite its simplicity, is engaging and valued by the child as well as the adult. Expression resides in the total composition, with the theme determining the choice of characters, objects, and their arrangement. Even the simple arrangements young children make can convey complex feelings and relationships (Golomb, 2004: 167).

The aim of this research is through analyzing the thematic drawings of children aged 6-7 to define the level of their social adaptation in their group at the end of the preschool period. For accomplishing that a creative methodic is being used. This methodic counts on spontaneity and honesty of children in their creative activity with thematic drawing. Analyzing the results are based on the following creative methodics: "Drawing of a family" and "A school drawing of Prout". The main elements that are being taken into account with these methodics are the number and size of the figures, the size and place of the me-figure in the drawing, the presence of other elements, their number and size in the drawing, the place of the figures and other elements, the type of contour and lines.

The theme the kids have to follow is: "Me and my friends in kindergarten". They have enough time and the necessary materials for retain the drawing. Every child works with its own tempo and is not restricted in time to finish its drawing.

According to the figures and the presence of a Me-figure we separated the drawings into four different groups. In the first there are the drawings with a lack of a Me-figure. Only 10% of the kids participating in the research haven't included the Me-figure in their drawings (fig. 1, fig. 2).

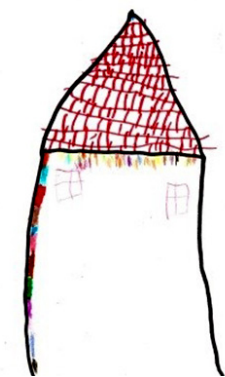


Figure 1



Figure 2

In their drawings those kids have depicted only the building of the kindergarten. Avoiding the actual theme speaks about a discomfort in the environment the theme is about. For these 10% of the kids we could say they lack a good level of social adaptation in their group in kindergarten.

In the second group of drawings we placed the ones that depicted only the Me-figure and some details about the interior or exterior of the kindergarten. 35% of the researched children have depicted their selves alone in kindergarten (fig. 3, fig. 4).



Figure 3



Figure 4

Extremely interesting are those drawings of two kids of the group that depicted more than one Me-figure. One of the girls has drawn three Me-figures (the ones with the word “A3” above), and one of the boys has drawn two of them. Both the kids have depicted no other characters in their drawings (figures 5 and 6).



Figure 5



Figure 6

The presence of only one figure that the kid identifies itself with, speaks about a lack of a feeling of appurtenance and participation in the environment in kindergarten. The reason this happens is because of the typical of the age self-centered thinking. The type and size of the Me-figure is of great importance for defining the way the kid feels about itself in the kindergarten community. Having a big, nicely drawn figure in the center of the paper sheet, filled with bright colors, with lots of details shows a great egocentrism and a feeling of self-importance, concentrated attention towards its own desires and pretenses. Such are 43% of the drawing in the “only a Me-figure” category, or 15% of all the kids taking part of the research. Kids that multiplied the Me-figure are also included in this percentage.

The rest 57% of this group drawn only a Me-figure, that are 20% of all the kids have drawn a small, monochrome figure, schematic, with almost no details, that shows a strong feeling of abandonment and rejection (fig. 7, fig. 8).



Figure 7



Figure 8

In 35% of the researched drawings the kids have drawn themselves with only one friend from their kindergarten group. This can also be linked with the typical for the 6-7 year-olds psychological feature, related to the friendships at that age. Usually they regard one child, that they are attached to fig. 9 and fig. 10.



Figure 9



Figure 10

In 2/3 of the placed in this group drawings, the Me-figure is equal in size with the figure of the friend. (fig. 9) but in the other 1/3 the Me-figure is way smaller than the figure of the friend which may be regarded as a feeling of unimportance in the friendship (fig. 10).

In only 20% of the researched drawings the kids have drawn 3 or more figures, which is the closest to the actual situation in kindergarten and shows a willingness to express it as realistically as possible. In half of the drawings in this group there

is also an attempt for drawing movements. The figures are linked to each other by a mutual activity (fig. 11 and fig. 12).

Although relatively statically drawn, which is a natural tendency when drawing a human figure with 6-7 year-olds, the postures and places of the figures makes the composition a little bit more dynamic.



Figure 11



Figure 12

In all the rest of the drawings, not only from this group, the figures are statically drawn with analyzing childrens' drawings and with the tests "A drawing of a family" and "A school drawing" the distance between the figures and the grouping of the figures is taken into consideration. Depending on whether the Me-figure is close to the other figures or there is a distance between them, we judge about the level of affection between them. In only one of the drawings we could say there that the Me-figure is a part of a group of figures without a big distance between them (fig. 13).



Figure 13

If we take that the drawings with no Me-figure or with no figures at all, and with only a Me-figure are interpreted as a symbol of detachment, isolation from the environment of friends and classmates, then we can see that a great part of kids that age feel that way in the school environment.

We can depict those results in the following way in figure 14.

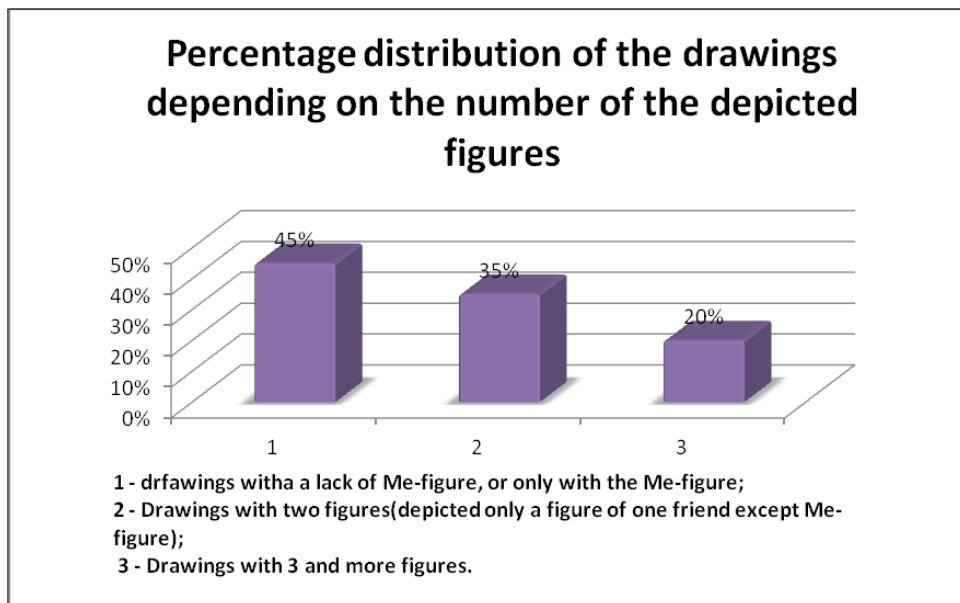


Figure 14

By summarizing all that information from the analyzed thematic drawings of kids aged 6 – 7, we can see that almost half of them (45%) show a low level of social adaptation in kindergarten, although they have been visiting it for the last 4 years.

At 35% or about 1/3 of the kids have depicted in their drawings an interest towards only one friend of the kindergarten environment. According to the psychological features of the age this is the normal level of interest towards a social environment outside the family. Only 20% of the researched kids have shown a high level of social adaptation in their drawings. If we compare those results to the data received by E. Rusinova we can see that a high level of adaptation to the social environment has a high level of correlation, gap between the low and high levels of social adaptation.

In one research of the informational and consultative favor for headmasters of schools “The Key” that leads a research in Great Britain, asking over 1000 primary school teachers, they found out that tens of thousands of students start school with no basic abilities of communication and hygiene. Teachers report that 8 out of 10 first-grade-students suffer from slurred speech and a lack of social abilities.

The shocking report blames the parents for neglecting their kids' development, because they're obsessed with their smartphones.

Reflecting their knowledge and attitude towards the World of the kids in their drawings is a proven way for sharing information in a graphic way. Valeria Muhina defines the "Creative activity of the kid as a form of gaining social experience", but except the assimilation of this experience in kids' drawings we can see the messages they send us about the social experience, and their level of connectedness with the environment that they belong to.

The domination of classes with a technological focus over the normal for the kids playing and creative activities are most probably the reason for the low social adaptation of 6-7 year-olds to the school environment.

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✉ **Dr. Ani Zlateva, Assoc. Prof.**

Faculty of Education
Trakia University
Stara Zagora, Bulgaria
E-mail: ani_zlateva@yahoo.com